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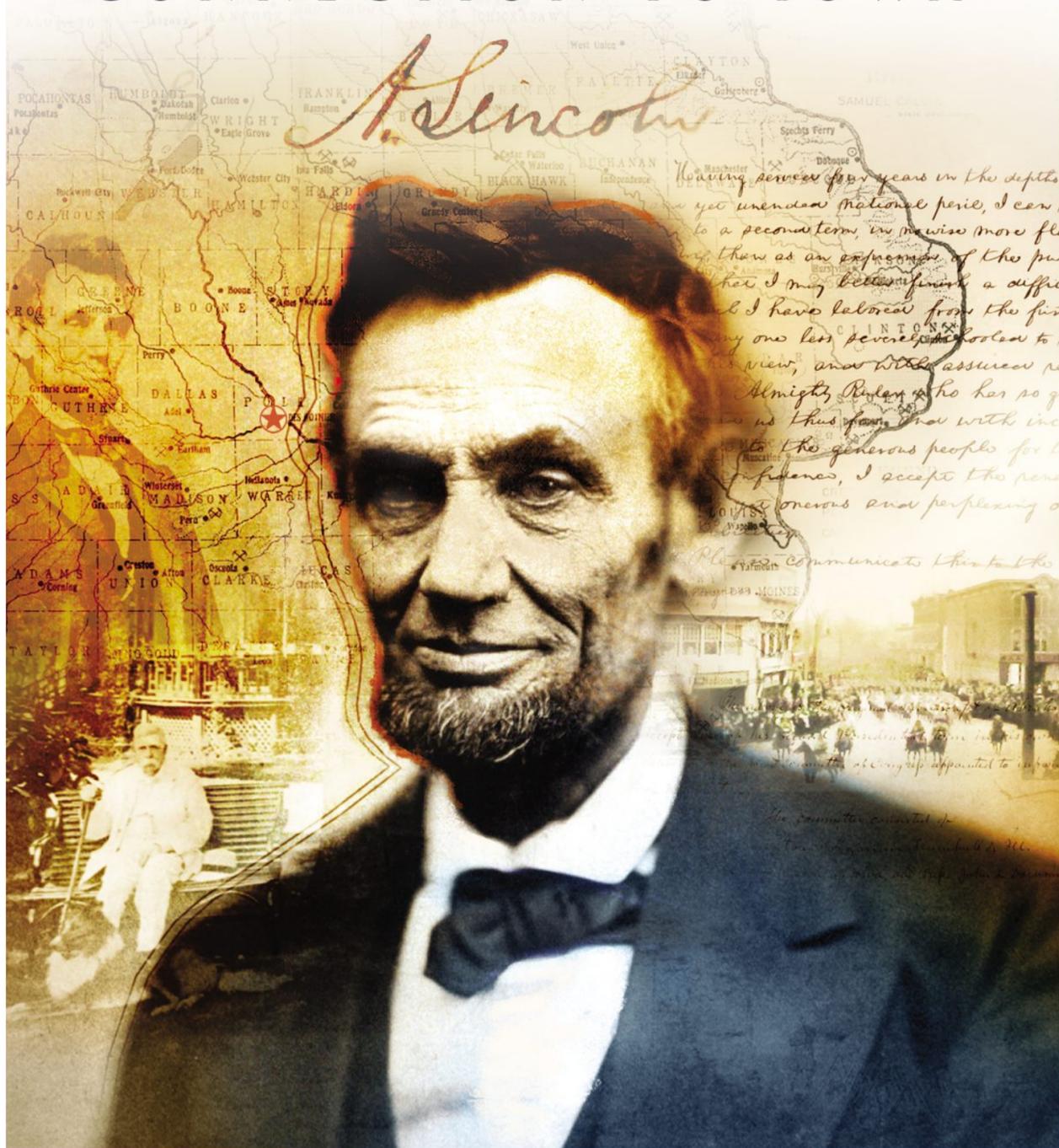
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ABE LINCOLN

CONNECTION TO IOWA



MARK MARTURELLO/REGISTER ILLUSTRATION FROM REGISTER FILE AND STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOS

Long before Steven Spielberg's biopic of our 16th president received 12 Academy Award nominations, Abraham Lincoln connected with the state during his travels and ascension in politics.

By Ann Hinga Klein
Special to the Register

Poring over biographies from the archives at the University of Northern Iowa library in 2008, Black Hawk County Auditor Grant Veeder felt himself being pulled into a delicious trip back in time. As a member of the Iowa Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, he had agreed to research Lincoln's ties to Iowa for a series of brochures.

Early in the project, Veeder received copies of old Iowa newspaper articles from a commission colleague with the State Historical Library of Iowa. "They were like precious gems in my hands," he said. And they inspired him to look not just to Lincoln biographies, but to those of historic Iowans.

"Iowa grew enormously in the 1850s and '60s," Veeder said. "As I was researching some of these people, I saw that a lot of them had similar stories to Lincoln, moving west in their youth. They were people who were searching for what we'd call the American dream, people that knew there would be more opportunities for them to be successful in whatever their calling was if they went to the Western frontier."

In the 1840s, as Lincoln's reputation grew, prominent Iowans began extending invitations. His travels here, along with the roles Iowa residents played in his life and leadership, place Iowa "among a very small number of states where he had a significant amount of interaction," Veeder said.

A look at some of Lincoln's connections to the state of Iowa:



A plaque in Crawford County, marking part of the 120 acres of land Lincoln once owned. He never saw the land, and his son later sold the parcels. GRANT VEEDER/SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

1 1855: Lincoln becomes an Iowa landowner

Early in his adult life, Lincoln enlisted in the Black Hawk War, now considered key to opening Iowa to European American settlement in 1832. Historians' accounts of broken treaties and descriptions of the events of the struggle can be hard to square against 21st century viewpoints. And while Veeder and other historians say Lincoln held views typical of European Americans during his time, "he had some interaction with Native Americans that show his well-deserved reputation for personal empathy and fairness."

Lincoln later received land grant warrants awarded by Congress. In 1855, he legally acquired a parcel of 40 acres in Tama County, which remains marked by a plaque four miles north and two miles west of Toledo. In 1860, he used a second warrant for 120 acres to acquire a piece of ground in Crawford County, marked a mile east of Schleswig. Lin-

IOWANS AND THE CIVIL WAR

Thousands of Iowans answered Abraham Lincoln's call to serve in the Civil War in 1861, and Iowa regiments fought in a number of decisive battles. At home, Iowa women ran farms and stores and sent food and medicine to wounded soldiers. Learn more and view more than 300 artifacts and documents at "Iowa and the Civil War, Nothing But Victory," currently on display at the State Historical Museum of Iowa, 600 E. Locust St. in Des Moines.

coln died without seeing the land he owned in either county, which was later owned by his son, Robert, and his wife, who sold the parcels in 1875 and 1892.

John A. Hansen, 60, and his wife, Sharon, own 40 acres of the Crawford County land, and use it to graze cattle. "It's just a big hill. It's not good farmland. It tied in to my grandfather's land—that's why he bought it," John Hansen said. "His land was right next to it."

Lincoln also held land in and around Council Bluffs. Railroad attorney Norman B. Judd borrowed \$2,500 from his friend Lincoln in 1857 to purchase land there, anticipating that the area would become valuable due to railroad expansion.

2 1857: Lincoln, the attorney, helps hasten westward expansion into Iowa

The first bridge across the Mississippi River, completed in 1856 and spanning from Rock Island, Ill., to Davenport, opened an unprecedented route for western travel. Riverboat operators, who had previously offered the

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Growing crop of local plays hits the stage

When someone writes a story and wants to turn it into a book, it's no longer that difficult to make it happen. Find a self-publishing website. Click. Print. Ship. The end.

But playwrights have a trickier challenge. If they want a finished product, they have to wrangle up a stage, a director and actors to bring the story to life. There are many moving parts, but they come together in central Iowa more often than you might expect.

Two homegrown shows are slated to open Friday — one produced by Tallgrass Theatre in West Des Moines and another, written by middle- and high-school students, at Fisher Theater in Ames.

"The fact that I can sit and watch a play that was initially written by an 11-year-old, I mean, holy cow! It's not Shakespeare. It's not Tennessee Williams. It's MaKenna Wallace," Ames Children's Theater Director Carole Horowitz said of the Ankeny writer, one of five who penned "Play With Words."

The show consists of a few short stories and poems set to original music. It's a joint effort by ACT, the Ames Public Library and Iowa State Center, which stepped up to provide students creative opportunities that don't always happen in the era of test-score-focused schools.

The students wrote the poems and stories — about a wagon train, fairies and at least one big, scary dog — during a workshop last summer. They recruited a teacher to direct a multigenerational cast. Iowa State staffers joined in to help with lighting, sets and ticketing.

The same kind of cooperative energy is guiding "Open House" in West Des Moines. Written by Craig Owens, who teaches English at Drake

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PLAY WITH WORDS

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday
WHERE: Iowa State Center's Fisher Theater, at Beach Avenue and Lincoln Way in Ames
TICKETS: \$10
INFO: www.center.iastate.edu

OPEN HOUSE

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday through Feb. 2
WHERE: Rex Mathes Auditorium, 1401 Vine St., West Des Moines
TICKETS: \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door
INFO: www.tallgrasstheatre.org
NOTE: This play contains adult situations and language.